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Kaiser Permanente Aids Kids at the San Jose Children's Discovery Museum *6 years of grants aimed at improving nutrition, fighting obesity*

Kaiser Permanente neurologist Dr. Raj Bhandari found himself doing a spirited conga line dance with a 7-foot tall river otter cartoon character and smiling all the way the other day at the San Jose Children's Discovery Museum. While that might be unusual for some physicians, it is relatively normal for Dr. Bhandari, the chief of the Kaiser Permanente San Jose Medical Center, who has had a long and fun relationship with CDM, the kids that visit there, and their well-being.

Dr. Bhandari's dancing partner was "Potter the Otter", the larger-than-life cartoon star of FIRST 5 Santa Clara County's children's book that urges kids to drink water rather than sugar-filled soft drinks and juice packs. Kaiser Permanente, First Five and others are distributing the cartoon book.

"Statistics show that the average 4-5 year old consumes almost 65 pounds of added sugar every year," says Dr. Bhandari. "That's more than 17 teaspoons of sugar each day from sugary drinks. Kids taking in that amount of sugar are heading for early onset diabetes and an adulthood of diabetes-caused conditions, including heart disease and potential strokes."

Improving the health of the community is one of Kaiser Permanente's missions. The KP Community Benefit program awards annual grants supporting efforts to improve the overall health of communities it serves. This year alone, the four Kaiser Permanente Medical Centers in the Silicon Valley (Fremont, Redwood City, Santa Clara and San Jose) awarded over \$2 million in health grants to community health agencies.

For over six years Kaiser Permanente San Jose has supported a variety of creative aspects of the museum's offerings, mainly in the area of healthy eating and now, healthy exercise.

Kaiser Permanente has helped to change the look and feel of the Hope Kids' Café by redecorating the tables and walls with "healthy living" photos as an added inducement for customers to make healthy food choices. The Public Health Department aided the café with nutritional guidance.

Kaiser Permanente regularly puts on healthy nutrition demonstrations for the kids and their parents at CDM. One project encourages children to "Eat a

Rainbow" of different colors of fruit.

Dr. Bhandari recently presented CDM with a \$50,000 check to kick off the "Jumpstart Campaign," which creates community spaces where children experience the benefits of an active lifestyle, and families and caregivers are energized to try new ways of keeping kids active and healthy.

With a trace of wry in her voice, the museum's Executive Director Marilee Jennings said Kaiser Permanente is "putting some meat around the vision" of a museum dedicated to kids' experiences and health.



Kaiser Permanente San Jose's Dr. Raj Bhandari, 2nd from left, joins others in welcoming "Potter" the water drinking otter.